

Rules of the Game

Making Magic Items (Part Two)

By Skip Williams



Now that we've reviewed some essential game terminology related to item creation and examined the basic rules governing the process, let's look at what's involved in making some scrolls and potions. From a player or DM's perspective, these are easiest items to make because they're fairly cheap and their effects are exactly the same as the spells they store.

Creating Scrolls

Of all the magic items described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, scrolls that contain low-level spells are the cheapest and easiest to make. That's because a scroll is just a spell made ready to cast and stored in a written form.

Prerequisites: To make any scroll, you need the Scribe Scroll item creation feat. (The feat itself has a caster level of 1st as a prerequisite.) The creator must also have prepared the spell to be scribed (or must know the spell, in the case of a sorcerer or bard).

Caster Level: A character creating a scroll can set the caster level for the scroll at any level from the minimum level that character would have to be to cast the spell up to that character's caster level when casting that spell. For example, a 10th-level wizard creates a scroll with a *fireball* spell on it. *Fireball* is a 3rd-level spell for a wizard, and a wizard must be at least 5th level to cast it, so the wizard in this example must create the scroll with a caster level of at least 5th. Since the example wizard is 10th level, the scroll can't have a caster level higher than 10th.

Equipment and Materials: Making a scroll requires high-quality writing materials (pens, inks, and parchment or paper) that must be previously unused. That is, no matter how many times you write a scroll (even a scroll with the same spell stored on it), you must pay the full cost to create the scroll. You also need any material components or focuses required to cast the spell. Material components are consumed when you make the scroll, but focuses are not (just as would happen if you cast the spell). If the spell description contains any unusual actions in connection with material components (for example, the *stoneskin* spell requires the caster to sprinkle diamond dust on the spell's recipient), ignore them -- material components are consumed when you create the scroll.

The scroll also requires a writing surface (which can be reused). Because a character can write almost any place where the parchment won't blow away in the wind, you can certainly write a scroll while encamped in the wilderness, or just about anywhere else.

Base Price: You can look up base prices for most scrolls in Chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, but I find it easier to use the formula for spell trigger items from Table 7-33 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*: spell level x caster level x 25 gp.

Creation Cost: The monetary cost to create a scroll is half the base price, plus the cost for any expensive material component the spell requires. In this case an "expensive" component is any component with a monetary cost listed in the spell description. For example, the *stoneskin* spell requires 250 gp worth of diamond dust. As noted earlier, you also must provide any focuses the spell requires. The cost for a focus (which can be considerable) is not included in a scroll's creation cost because you can reuse it (for another scroll or to cast the spell or both).

The experience cost to create a scroll is 1/25th the base price, plus any experience component the spell has. For example, the *commune* spell requires 100 XP from the caster; making a scroll with a *commune* spell costs an extra 100 XP.

In the case of spells that have variable XP costs, your best choice is to allow the character creating the scroll to decide how much extra experience to spend. When someone uses the scroll, what the scroll can accomplish is limited by how much extra experience the creator put into the scroll. For example, the *permanency* spell has an XP component that varies according to a second spell that is to be made permanent. If someone creates a scroll with a *permanency* spell and decides to spend an extra 1,000 XP, that scroll can make permanent any spell that would take 1,000 XP or less from the *permanency* caster (such as *alarm*, *magic fang*, or *invisibility*). If the character using the scroll uses it to make a spell with a cost of less than 1,000 XP permanent, the unused XP are wasted.

Market Price: A scroll's market price is its base price, plus the cost for any expensive material components the spell requires. If a spell also required an extra XP cost, the market price increases by 5 gp per extra point spent.

Example Scroll Costs: Suppose the 10th-level wizard in our previous examples creates some of the scrolls we've talked about here. The scrolls' creation costs and market prices would be as follows:

A scroll of *fireball* with a caster level of 5th has a base price of 375 gp (3 x 5 x 25). The gp cost to create the scroll is 187 gp, 5 sp (1/2 the base price of 375 gp). The XP cost to create the scroll is 15 XP (1/25 the base price of 375 gp). The market price is the same as the base price.

A scroll of *fireball* with a caster level of 10th has a base price of 750 gp (3 x 10 x 25). The gp cost to create the scroll is 375 gp (1/2 the base price of 750 gp). The XP cost to create the scroll is 30 XP (1/25 the base price of 750 gp). The market price is the same as the base price.

A scroll of *stoneskin* with a caster level of 9th has a base price of 900 gp (4 x 9 x 25). The gp cost to create the scroll is 700 gp (1/2 the base price of 900 gp) plus 250 gp for the diamond dust. The XP cost to create the scroll is 36 XP (1/25 the base price of 900 gp). The market price is 1,150 gp (the base price of 900 gp plus 250 gp for the diamond dust).

A scroll of *permanency* with a caster level of 9th that is suitable for making a spell with extra XP cost of up to 1,000 XP permanent has a base price of 1,250 gp (5 x 10 x 25). The gp cost to create the scroll is 625 (1/2 the base price of 1,250 gp). The XP cost to create the scroll is 1,050 XP (1/25 the base price of 1,250 gp plus the extra 1,000 XP for the spell). The market price is 6,250 gp (the base price of 1,250 gp plus 5,000 gp for the extra XP cost).

Scroll Miscellany: A couple of other things are worth noting here. First, the *permanency* scroll takes two days to create because its base price is more than 1,000 gp, but not more than 2,000 gp. Nevertheless, the creator pays extra monetary and XP costs for the *permanency* spell only once because the scroll only works once. Still, the

creator must have the spell *permanency* prepared (or otherwise available) each day he works on the scroll.

Also, all the scrolls shown in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* contain a single spell. There's not actually any rule that limits scrolls to a single spell (see page 237 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). To create a scroll of multiple spells, combine the spells' base costs to determine the scroll's creation time and XP costs. If the multiple spell scroll is abandoned, the whole expenditure is wasted.

One advantage to creating a scroll with multiple spells is that you have to use only one action to get out the scroll during an encounter. Once you have the scroll in hand, you can read any spell it contains. DMs should feel free to set a reasonable limit to the number of spells you can search through on a multispell scroll before you have to use an action to find the one you want. I recommend a maximum of seven spells. If a scroll contains more spells than that, it takes a move action to find the correct one. As spells are used from a scroll, the writing that stores them vanishes from the scroll, which can make the remaining spells easier to search.

Creating Potions

A potion is somewhat similar to a scroll because it is a stored spell in drinkable form (or in spreadable form in the case of an oil). Unlike a scroll, only certain kinds of spells can be made into potions or oils. The spell must be 3rd level or lower, and it must have a casting time of less than 1 minute. The spell stored in the potion or oil must have a target entry in its spell description (see [Reading Spell descriptions](#)) and be a spell that the caster can target upon herself or upon an object she touches. A spell with a personal range cannot be made into a potion or oil, and neither can a spell with an area or effect entry.

Spells that can affect multiple targets can be made into potions or oils, but the potion or oil affects only one target, no matter what the potion's caster level.

Prerequisites: To make any potion or oil, you need the Brew Potion item creation feat. (The feat itself has a caster level of 3rd as a prerequisite.) The creator also must have prepared the spell to be brewed into the potion or oil (or must know the spell, in the case of a sorcerer or bard).

Caster Level: A character creating a potion or oil can set the caster level for the potion or oil at any level from the minimum level that character would have to be to cast the spell up to that character's caster level when casting that spell, just as noted for scrolls.

Equipment and Materials: Making a potion or oil requires a level working surface and at least a few containers in which to mix liquids (and to store the finished item), a source of heat to boil the brew, and fresh ingredients from which to make the potion. Some DMs require a potion maker to pay 500 gp for an alchemist's lab, but 5 gp for artisan's tools ought to be sufficient. The tools can be reused and their cost isn't included in the cost to make or buy a potion or oil.

Potion making probably isn't something you can do while camping out.

Base Price: You can look up base prices for most scrolls in Chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, but I find it easier to use the formula for single use, use-activated items from Table 7-33 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*: spell level x caster level x 50 gp.

Creation Cost: The monetary cost to create a potion or oil is half the base price, plus the cost for any expensive

material component the spell requires, just as with a scroll.

The experience cost to create a potion or oil is 1/25th the base price, plus any experience component the spell has, just as for a scroll.

Market Price: A potion or oil's market price is its base price, plus the cost for any expensive material components the spell requires. If a spell also requires an extra XP cost, the market price increases by 5 gp per extra point spent.

Potion Miscellany: A potion or oil always takes one day to brew, no matter what its base price.

Your character may create wondrous items that are similar to potions (for example, an *elixir of fire breath*), but such items are made with the Craft Wondrous Item feat and their creation times aren't limited to one day.

What's Next?

That pretty well covers potions and scrolls. Next week, we'll look at what's involved in creating wands and staffs.

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of *Dragon Magazine* for 18 years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

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